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FLANDERS

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Flanders, or the Flemish Plain, is the low, flat, and damp country which abuts on the higher and drier lands of the Heights of Artois on the southwest and the Brabant Plateau on the east and whose limits may be roughly described as the North Sea, the lower Schelde and its estuary, the Dender River, a series of dry chalk ridges south of Lille, and the Heights of Artois. This region, since the early Middle Ages, has been one of the most active centers of western Europe; and the furious battles which have been fought there since October, 1914, have given it a new and terrible renown.

The people who inhabit this region, as many peoples elsewhere, have been deeply influenced by the character of the land, but in few regions has man been able to overcome so successfully as here the obstacles placed in his way by an inhospitable nature and to create for himself so satisfactory an abode. To understand the measure of this struggle and its success, it is first necessary to outline somewhat in detail the physical development of the area.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHYSICAL FEATURES

The Anglo-Flemish Basin. That Flanders is a lowland is primarily due to the fact that it forms part of an extensive zone of submergence. It is, indeed, only a part of the Anglo-Flemish Basin, the counterpart of the Paris Basin on the other side of the Artois anticline. On it thick beds of sediments were deposited by the sea. These sediments are all clays, gravels, and sands, the characteristic rocks of Flanders, and the beds are locally several hundred meters deep. The last deposit of the region is a thin bed of ferruginous gravels and sandstones deposited upon a peneplane. Thus Flanders finally had the appearance of an uninterrupted and perfectly even coastal plain, slightly tilted upwards to the southwest about an axis

in the neighborhood of Antwerp. It was on the peneplaned surface, after these successive stages of submergence and emergence, that the present topography was carved.

Relief and Drainage. The sea having withdrawn northeastward toward what is now Holland, the watercourses which were to model the relief of the country took up the same direction. They formed consequent trunk streams, flowing from the uplands of Artois in a northeasterly direction. The upper Aa, the Lys, the upper Deule, the middle Schelde, and the Dender River represent the chief remnants of these streams. The largest of these consequent streams occupied the site of the Strait of Dover and flowed parallel to the present coast of Flanders. Broad and deep valleys

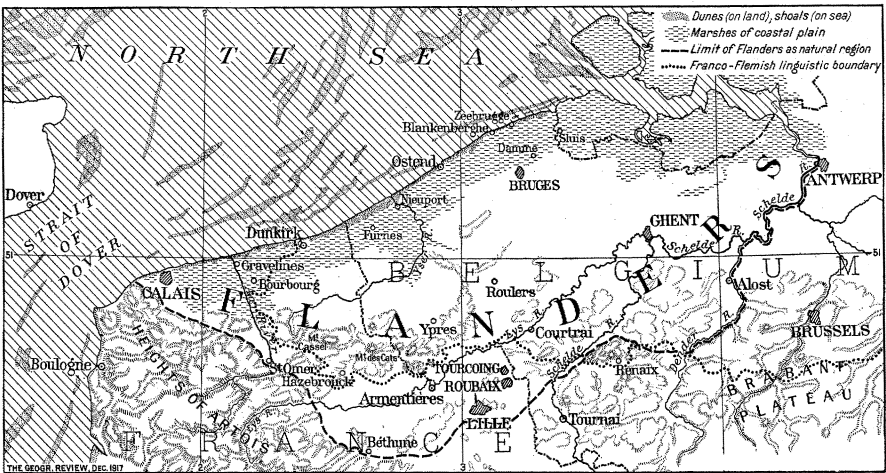


FIG. 1.—Sketch-map of Flanders and its limits as a natural region. Scale, 1:2,000,000, or about 32 miles to the inch.

were developed. The beds, their edges outcropping at a low angle, parallel to the axis of Artois, were not equally soft. The clays were more resistant than the gravels and sands. Along each of these clay outcrops a small cuesta developed. Four successive lines may be traced, each one representing the outcrop of a clay bed dipping northeastward. But these cuestas were composed of rocks of so little resistance that they have been reduced to a series of low hills, more and more dissected and disconnected as one goes westward. The most noteworthy of these series of hills consists of Mont Cassel (173 meters, or 568 feet), the Mont des Cats, the hillocks near Ypres and Tourcoing, and the Renaix hills. It is known as the “monts de Flandre” and corresponds to the outcrop of the Ypres clay. Between these ranges of hills the sands and gravels have been washed away to a considerable degree, producing large depressions. The most important is the depression which extends in front of the Ypres beds, along the foot of the uplands of Artois, from St. Omer to Lille, namely the plain of the Lys River. Thus the former gently sloping peneplane is today completely

dissected, and the *cuestas* themselves are hardly recognizable. All Flanders is now a great plain extending outward from the foot of the Heights of Artois, interrupted here and there by isolated hills. The hydrographic system which has been the agent of so great a change is therefore in an advanced stage of development. New connections have been established between the different trunks, and the upper waters of the old consequent streams have been captured by the headward growth of the branch valleys (Fig. 2). Thus, the upper Deule was beheaded and turned to the Lys; the upper Dender was tapped by the middle Schelde; and the Aa River, formerly a tributary of the Lys, has been turned to the North Sea. All these captures have added to the streams flowing west of the beheaded rivers.

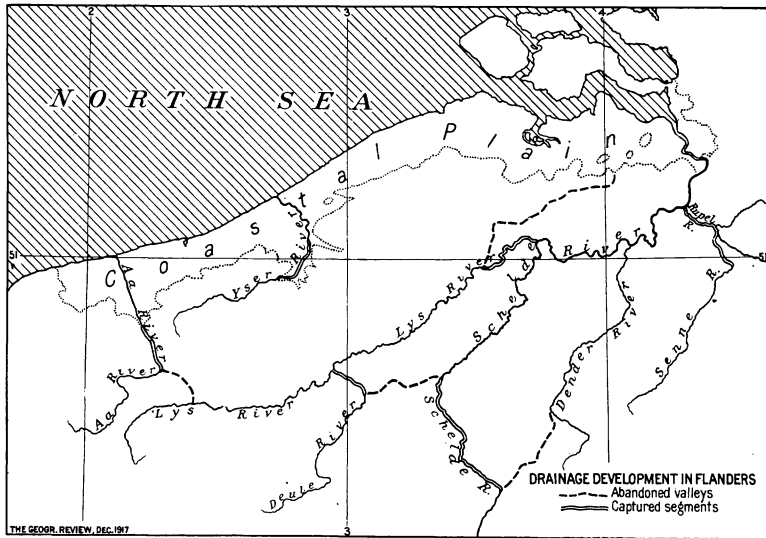


FIG. 2—Outline map showing the physiographic development of the principal Flemish rivers. Scale, 1:2,000,000, or about 32 miles to the inch.

This is due to the fact that a recent advance of the sea during Quaternary times—the one which created the Strait of Dover—determined a new base level west of the Flemish plain.

Formation of the Flemish Sea. The “Flemish Sea,” as one may call the southern part of the North Sea between the shores of England and of Flanders, has indeed a recent origin. At the end of the Pliocene and during the early Quaternary, Britain was connected with the Continent. A period of subsidence during the middle Quaternary caused the sea to advance into all the Flemish valleys, especially into the bed of the large stream which paralleled the present shore. Thus a junction was effected with the waters which, in the Paris Basin, had entered the lower valley of the Seine, at that time extending as far as what is now the Channel. The Strait of Dover was thus definitely opened at this period. The action of the tides from the Channel passing through the new strait created the

system of northeast-southwest shoals which at present characterize the submarine relief of the Flemish Sea.

Such was the last of the great changes having a bearing on the final constitution of the soil of Flanders. At the end of the middle Quaternary the sea showed a tendency to recede slightly; it progressively abandoned the Flemish valleys, leaving there thick deposits of clayey sands (the so-called Flemish sands). But it still occupied the broad *talweg* on the site of which the Strait of Dover had been opened. On the Continental side the sea created an uncertain shore line and then advanced upon it anew. Thus were determined two Flanders: the first, along the shore, a coastal plain, continually subject to an advance or recession of the sea and thus intimately dependent on maritime phenomena; the second, inner Flanders, less flat, more forested, and more varied in aspect. It is there that we may best find displayed the essential traits of Flemish life: intensive agriculture combined with highly developed industry and an extraordinarily dense population.

THE COASTAL PLAIN

From Calais to Antwerp, along the coast of the North Sea, stretches a low plain 10 to 15 kilometers (6 to 9 miles) wide. This plain extends also through Zealand, Holland, Friesland, East Friesland, and the marshes of Schleswig to Jutland. This long fringe of low-lying land forms an area which is still in dispute between land and sea and is the scene of the last struggles between the two elements in the Anglo-Flemish Basin.

The Last Advance of the Sea. The last phases of this struggle took place a relatively short time ago. The Quaternary sea had withdrawn little by little from the present site of the plain; a line of sand dunes arose along the shore; behind them lay a series of fresh-water lagoons, which filled slowly with peat. It was on the peat bogs thus formed that Neolithic man lived. Traces of his existence have been found on their surface. Later came the Gauls and, finally, the Romans. It was across this boggy soil that the soldiers of Caesar and Labienus marched, pursuing the Menapii into the forests and swamps. Numerous remains of pottery and specimens of medals and coins show that the plain was occupied by the Gallo-Romans up to the end of the fourth century of our era.

Then a new change occurred. Since these Roman and prehistoric remains are today found buried beneath two to three meters of sand and gray clay, mixed with sea shells, it is certain that the plain was inundated at a later date than the end of the fourth century. History makes no mention of this inundation; however, this absence of written accounts is due to the fact that the advance of the sea took place at the same time as the invasion of Flanders by the Franks, that is to say coincidentally with the temporary suppression of all intellectual activity in that region. On the other hand, the inundation was neither sudden nor severe. In no place

was the peat gullied to any great depth. The on-coming of the water must have been slow and regular. The height of the flood was never extreme, since a certain number of shoals built up by the Quaternary sea were not submerged by the inundation of the fifth century. The waves covered the plain behind the dunes only at high tide; at low tide the water remained only in the winding channels, and the plain was a vast stretch of gray mud cut by narrow inlets. The *wadden* (mud flats) of Friesland present exactly the same appearance today behind the row of Frisian islands. The process is the same, but in Flanders its evolution is farther advanced.

The Emergence of the Plain. Indeed the sea probably soon receded from the coastal plain. Precisely because the inundation had been slight, the alluvial deposits carried by the tides of the Channel must have soon formed a bed deep enough to render the sheet of sea water extremely shallow upon the invaded area. After some centuries the deposits had increased to such a thickness that at high tide the waters could inundate the land only at rare intervals. From this time on vegetation sprang up on the beaches, transforming them into grassy plains, or *schorres*. Soon, man took possession of these new lands, brought his flocks of sheep, and built villages. The first of these villages, whose existence is established by the registers, or cartularies, of the great abbeys, were placed near the present shore upon the lines of dunes that the invasion of the sea had left untouched. In the eighth century, even the inundated zone began to be inhabited. As a precaution the new inhabitants erected dikes to protect the country against new attacks of the sea.

These dikes were particularly necessary along the estuaries which the sea still occupied and into which the rivers emptied. We know several of these estuaries, the gulfs of Calais, Gravelines, Dunkirk, Nieuport, and the Zwin gulf (the estuary of Bruges). Even these disappeared rapidly because the waters of the streams were not able to sweep away the deposits that the sea unceasingly accumulated in the creeks. The western gulfs shrank little by little to the sizes of the old basins of the ports of Calais, Gravelines, and Dunkirk. The gulf of Nieuport resisted longer; but at the end of the thirteenth century the tide definitively abandoned the vast plain which was to become the battlefield of the Yser. Finally, the Zwin had the same fate, shrinking continuously in spite of the desperate efforts of the burghers of Bruges to preserve this magnificent port. In the thirteenth century the tide did not reach farther up than Damme; in the fifteenth, not farther than Sluis; and in the sixteenth, the port of Bruges also had to be abandoned. Thus the coastal plain soon became dry. Man had no part in this conquest. It was accomplished by alluvial action alone, and it is not necessary to imagine a movement of the earth's crust to explain it. Man, however, had much to do in reclaiming this soil for cultivation.

The Reclamation of the Plain. These new lands abandoned by the sea had to be protected, in fact, against a many-sided enemy—water. It was

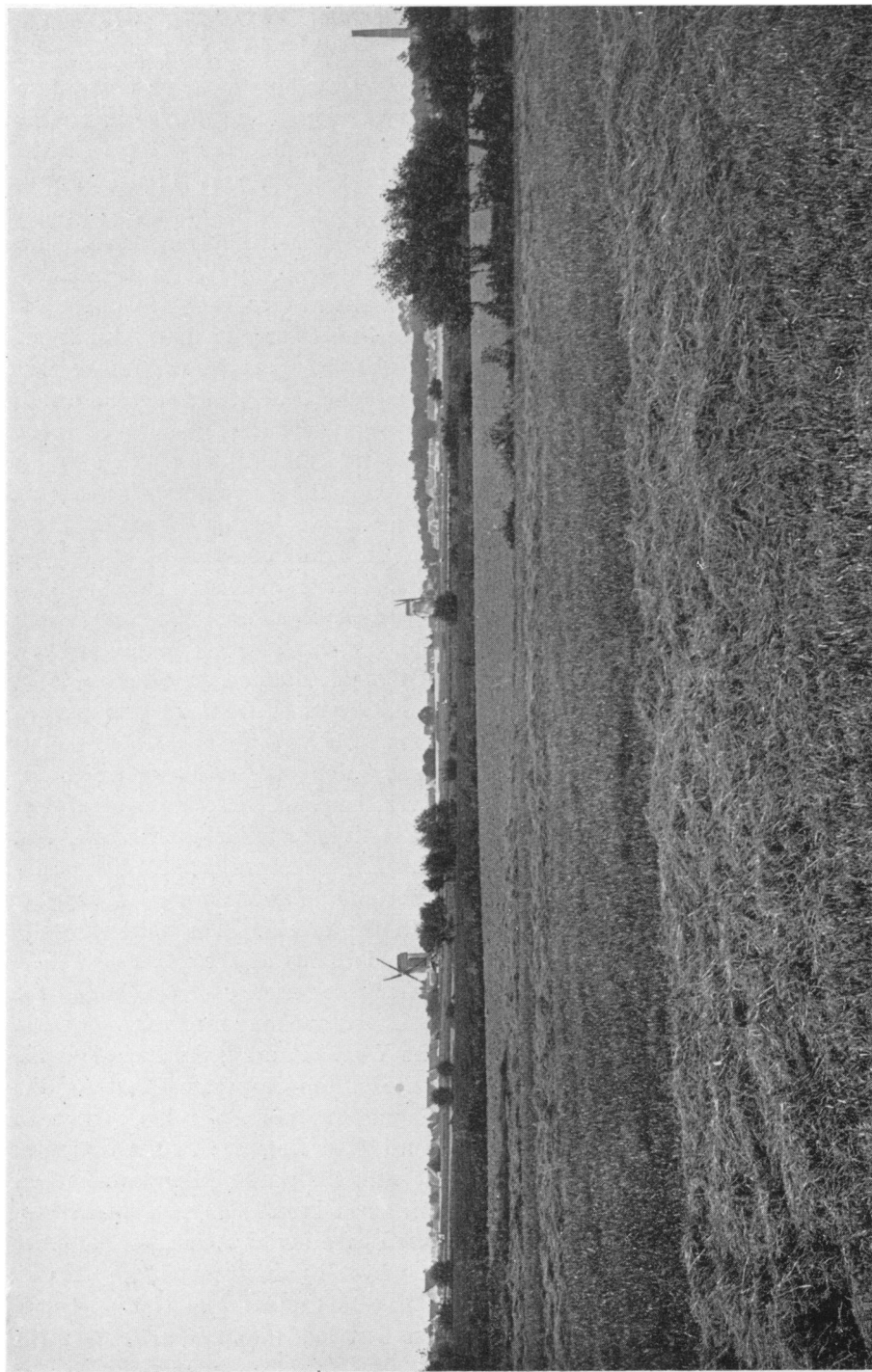


FIG. 3—Typical landscape in the Pevèle district of inner Flanders, between Lille and Douai: village of Bouvignies, south of Orchies. (Figs. 3 to 11 are from photographs by the author, Figs. 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11 being from his "La Flandre," Paris, 1906.)

necessary to protect the land against it in its various forms, whether salt or brackish or fresh.

The salt water of the sea, although apparently the most threatening, is not difficult to conquer. Repeated attacks of heavy tides are likely to happen at any time, because the surface of the plain, carefully drained by man, has settled, and is lower today than it was at the end of the Middle Ages. This, for instance, made it possible for the Belgians to stop the German advance on the Yser by permitting the sea water to overflow the ancient site of the gulf of Nieuport. But defence against this element, terrifying in appearance, is easy. The line of dunes forms, for almost the whole length of the coast, a most effective protection. In the places where these are broken in order to give exit to the fresh waters of the streams, dikes have been built of earth, not very rigid, but resistant, reinforced sometimes with stones and brushwood. It is unusual for storms to break this seemingly weak rampart and invade the country.

Far more difficult and complicated is the struggle against the brackish water which seeps under the dunes and tends to mount to the surface, destroying the vegetation, and against fresh water, as represented by rain and river water, which requires direct drainage to the sea. This problem is all the more difficult, as the plain is absolutely level and drainage cannot take place except at low tide, twice a day. For this reason it has been necessary to dig canals and ditches, in order that the water may be carried away as rapidly as possible towards the coast, and to erect a system of locks, by means of which the drainage can take place at low tide, while at high tide the closing of the headgates prevents the entrance of the sea. Finally it has been found necessary to keep enough fresh water in the ditches and canals to irrigate the land and prevent the rising of the brackish water.

This delicate and complicated task could only be effected by co-operation. It was impossible for an individual to build the canals, to continue them across a neighbor's territory, to install the sea gates, and to assure their proper management. Organization was necessary. An association was formed, the "Wateringue," consisting of a group of landowners who undertake the construction of the requisite works, supervise their operation, and divide the expense among themselves in the form of a special tax. This association has "rectified" the courses of streams, has built an immense network of drainage canals, and has installed a great number of locks besides those which are necessary for navigation. Today, fresh-water floods have become infrequent, the marshes have been drained, and agriculture is everywhere possible. The value of the reclaimed land proves the effort to have been worth while.

The Life of the Plain. The soil of the coastal plain is by far the richest in all Flanders. The gray clay deposited by the inundation of the fifth century forms in its natural state a soil of extraordinary fertility, and it

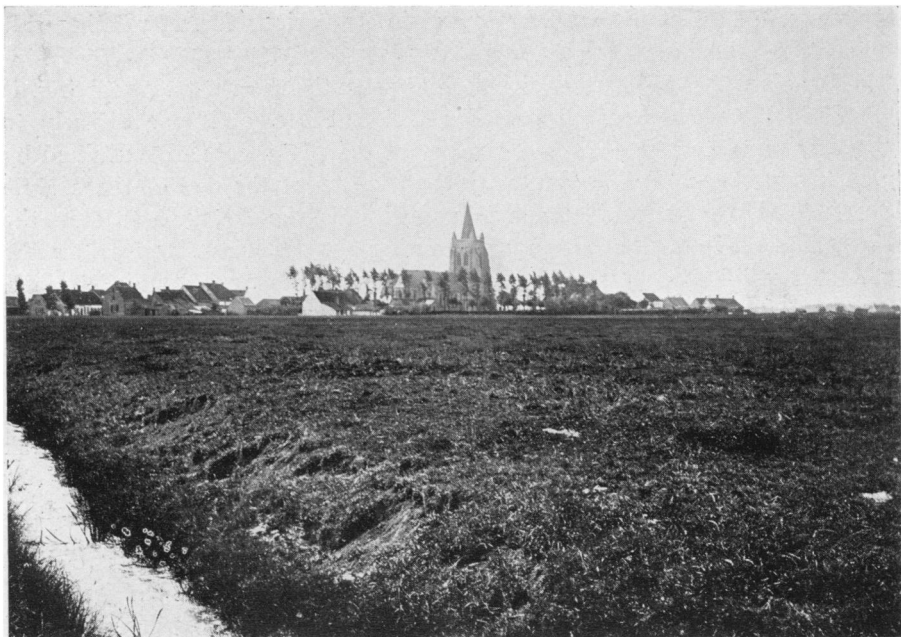


FIG. 4.



FIG. 5.

FIG. 4—Scene in the coastal plain: the village of Lampernisse west of Dixmude.

FIG. 5—A clearing, the site of a former peat bog, in the marshes of Ardres: coastal plain at the base of the Heights of Artois.

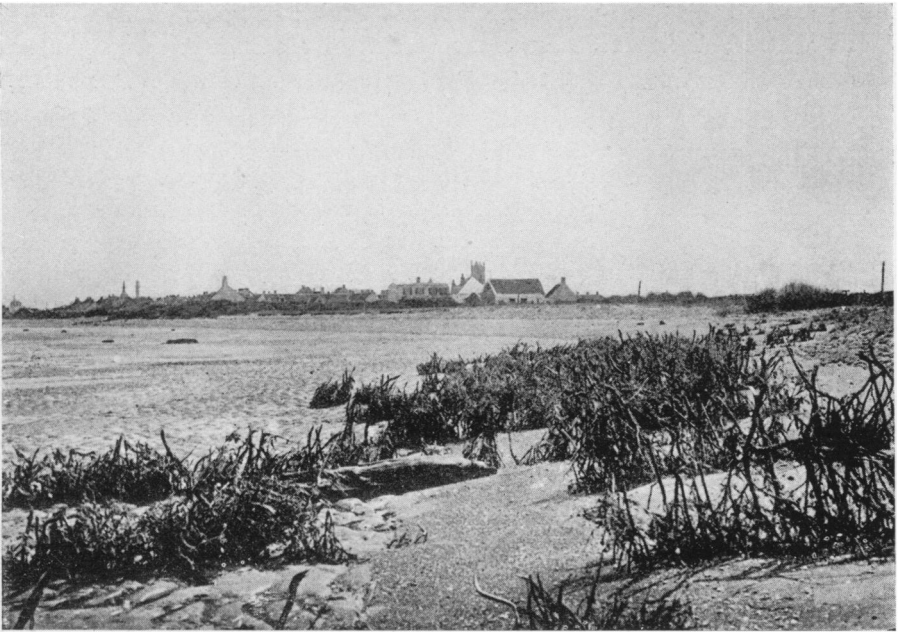


FIG. 6.

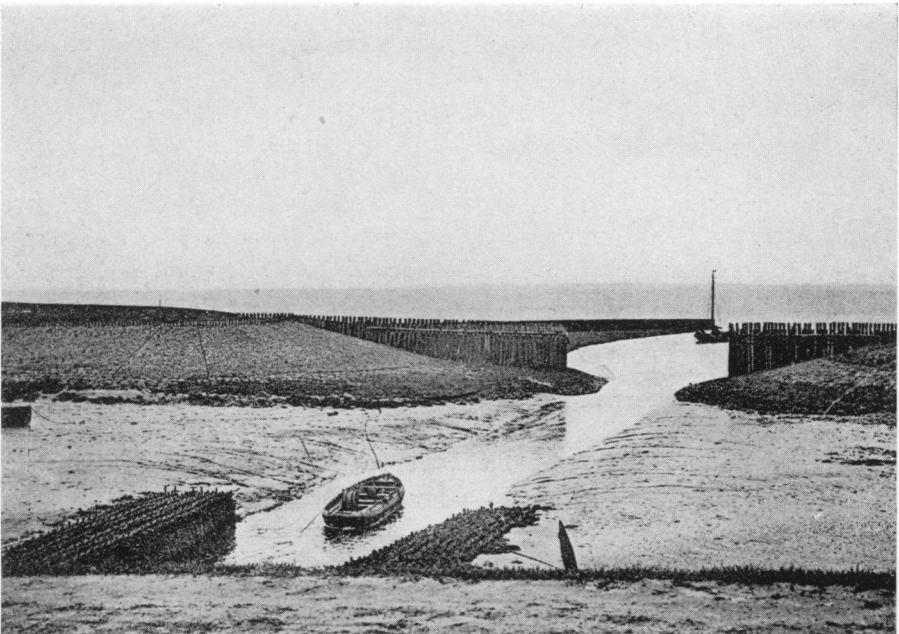


FIG. 7.

FIG. 6—Dune landscape on the coast of western Flanders. In the distance, Grand-Fort-Philippe, a town below Gravelines at the mouth of the Aa.

FIG. 7—A sluice-gate on the coast at Groede at the mouth of the Scheldt estuary. Drainage canals are necessary to carry off the superfluous water of the coastal plain, because its absolutely level character does not allow any natural run-off. Drainage is effected twice a day, at low tide, by means of an elaborate system of canals and locks, constructed and maintained by a co-operative association known as the "Wateringue."

is easy to restore by the use of fertilizers whatever richness cultivation has destroyed. It has therefore been the custom to grow crops that require a rich soil, such as wheat, flax, and, at present, sugar beets and chicory. The dampness of the soil favoring the growth of grass, natural meadows are still extensive and luxuriant. Cattle are brought here to be fattened for consumption in the large cities, and butter and cheese are produced. These agricultural resources support a well-to-do population, but somewhat sparse, as compared with the rest of Flanders. Settled at a relatively late period, the country was never crowded; and, as large funds were needed for the reclamation work, farming is done on a large scale, with the help of day laborers coming from inner Flanders, who go back after the crops have been gathered. There is no other industry. The coastal plain is therefore entirely a rural district, where the inhabitants live either on large farms, almost settlements in themselves, or in small villages. These villages generally consist of a row of cottages built on a dike running along a canal, in order to secure protection against inundation and have the advantage of a highway. Towns are extremely few, and, except for such instances as Furnes and Bourbourg, they are found only in the southern part of the plain, where it borders inner Flanders. Consequently they are important markets, places of exchange between dissimilar regions. The most noteworthy of these towns on the line of contact is Bruges, which was for a time the emporium of northwestern Europe but now has declined to the status of a mere local capital and market town, sleepy and impoverished, although it still retains the magnificent architectural monuments of the period of its prosperity.

The Coast. Contrasting with the placidity and the somnolence of the plain, the coast itself is active and densely populated. All along the straight line of dunes of which it is made up lives a numerous and active population. The land being less valuable, because less fertile, a large number of small farmers have settled here who work small holdings of sandy soil, from which they get good results, however, by unremitting labor. Alongside of these men who devote themselves exclusively to farming, live the fishermen; they keep their boats in the nearest harbor, but each one of them also has a small piece of land which he cultivates. Row upon row of clean and bright little houses can be seen along the dunes or in the depressions between them. On the shore, bathing resorts have been established which permit the people to enjoy the perfect beaches of fine sand, hundreds of meters wide at low tide. From Dunkirk to Ostend the coast is skirted by villas and hotels and lined by an elaborate dike promenade. No less than seven ports exist in this section.

These Flemish ports are not all of the same importance, and they differ also in their origin. Some are natural harbors left by the transformation of ancient estuaries; others have been completely constructed by man. But all of them, to prevent silting and to meet the local conditions of

wind and tide, had to be improved artificially. Man has had to work continuously to preserve them as ports. Dredging is a never-ending necessity to remove the accumulation of mud and silt deposited at high tide. In function and importance these ports also differ greatly. Blankenberghe, Nieuport, Gravelines are only fishing ports. Zeebrugge, which is entirely artificial, was created as a port of call and is sheltered by an immense curving mole protruding into the sea. It is used as a submarine base by the Germans in the present war. Calais and Ostend are ports for passengers and express traffic. In each port the part that has been best developed is the outer harbor, making it possible for vessels to dock at any time of day. Dunkirk, above all others, is today the great entrepôt of the Flemish coast, since it is the gateway to the rich industrial and agricultural region of Northern France. The growth of this port has been so rapid during the last fifty years that, although its basins have been frequently enlarged, they have not kept pace with the traffic, and congestion is its ordinary condition.

We thus see that the coastal plain is not only a quiet and prosperous rural district; it is also the façade of the enormous agricultural, industrial, and commercial organism of inner Flanders.

INNER FLANDERS

In spite of the nearness of the two regions and of their common characteristics of low elevation and humidity, inner Flanders differs in many ways from the coastal plain. The coastal plain is a fertile country, given up to farming, and relatively sparsely populated. Inner Flanders, on the contrary, is a poor land, made productive only by hard work and intensive cultivation. But what is more, it is a region where the enormous density of population makes possible and at the same time calls for highly developed commerce and especially industry.

Soil and Agriculture. Contrary to the legend which makes of Flanders pre-eminently a rich and fertile land, a legend owing its currency to the qualities of the coastal plain, the inner part of the country has only a meager soil, hard to cultivate, demanding obstinate toil. To the east, the soil is made of Quaternary sands, mobile and dry in some places like the sands of the dunes, so much so that it is necessary to stabilize them by planting grasses and the like. This sandy soil, poor in the elements needed for plant growth and exposed by radiation to disastrous frosts, can be made productive only by means of fertilizers. To the west, clays are found instead of sands, a condition hardly better, for tilling is often impossible because of their hardness and stickiness; and furthermore their chemical composition is none too good. The impermeability of the subsoil also necessitates artificial drainage, an arduous and costly process.

Such a land can be made to yield plentifully only by toil. Flemish agriculture is, as it were, a constant miracle. The necessity, however, of



FIG. 8.



FIG. 9.

FIG. 8—Scene in the coastal plain. A group of field workers in the middle background.

FIG. 9—Farm house in the prosperous country around Bailleul, southwest of Ypres, inner Flanders.



FIG. 10.

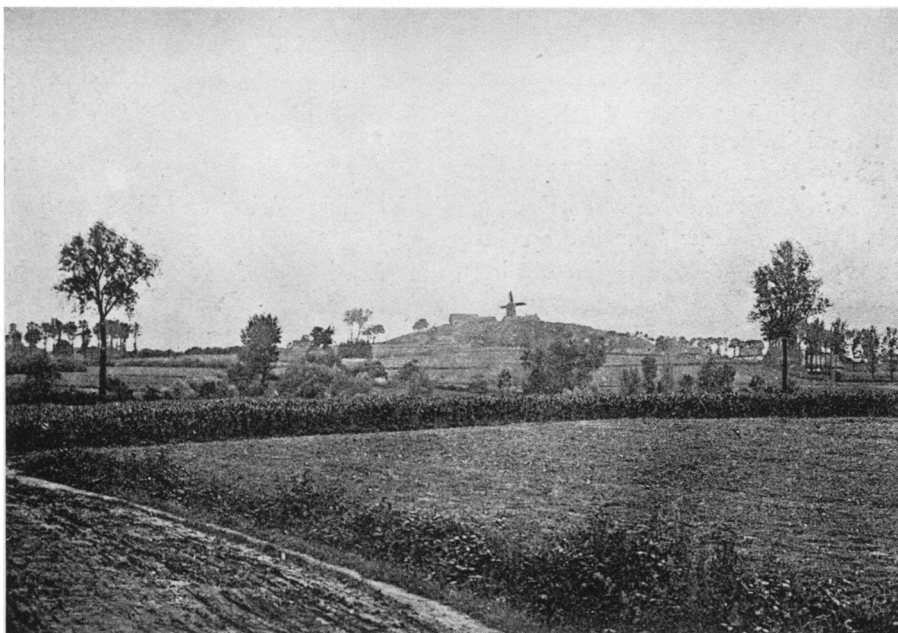


FIG. 11.

FIG. 10—Typical dike village of the coastal plain: Westdorpe, north-northeast of Ghent. Location along a dike affords protection against inundation and gives access to a highway.

FIG. 11—A typical hillock in the Flemish plain: Mont-Aigu near Loere. Relatively insignificant elevations of this sort form the strategic points in the present fighting in Flanders, as they dominate the surrounding plain.

feeding an enormous population, attracted to this region by its facilities for commerce, and the stubborn persistence of the Flemish peasant have turned these ungrateful lands into a rich agricultural region. A multitude of small farms have come into existence where man, armed with his heavy spade, engages in a hand-to-hand struggle with the land; while, at the same time, more scientific work has been done by landowners who are always on the lookout for improved methods of cultivation. In the use of fertilizers, in the rotation of crops, in the introduction of new grains, Flanders, rather than England, may be considered as the founder of modern agriculture.

The products obtained are various. On the sandy soil of the east are produced rye and potatoes. As one proceeds towards the southwest, the aspect and the composition of the vegetation change. While in the infertile east tree hedges and meadows predominate, in the more fertile west the soil is more completely devoted to cultivation and the landscape is more open. Wheat occupies the larger tracts, but crops of such economic importance as tobacco, flax, chicory, and sugar beets are also grown. The essential feature, however, of Flemish farming is cattle breeding, which is of growing importance. The greater part of the crops is used for the feeding of live stock. There are wide stretches of pasture land in this humid district, and these are being extended. The size of the herds, especially of cattle, has grown greatly, particularly in eastern Flanders, where the crops, too meager for man, are better adapted to feeding cattle. The density is almost everywhere more than one head per hectare ($2\frac{1}{2}$ acres), a proportion rarely equaled in any other country. Cattle raising, in fact, is the chief agricultural industry of inner Flanders, not only for the profit it brings, but also for the fertilizer it furnishes.

Manufacturing. Nevertheless, all the Fleming's labor on his soil and all his ability to draw from it crops large beyond expectation would not suffice to support him. This region has been too densely populated since the early Middle Ages for agriculture to suffice as the sole means of subsistence. Something else was necessary. Therefore, the people have always turned to manufacturing to supplement their resources. Manufacturing has always found favorable conditions in Flanders. The country furnished the raw materials—textile plants and wool of the sheep raised among the dunes. Laborers were at hand in abundance; indeed industries were necessary to occupy them. Finally the excellent means of communication made it easy to import raw materials from abroad and to export the manufactured products. The country was not only situated on the crossroads, so to speak, of the great sea routes of western Europe, but also communicated easily by land with France, Germany, and the Netherlands. In the interior of Flanders, while the character of the soil made the roads muddy, rutted, and difficult, an admirable system of navigable waterways permitted traffic to circulate freely. For these reasons, since the early Middle Ages, the

linen and woollen industries have flourished in the towns as well as in the rural districts throughout inner Flanders.

The industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, in modifying the character of this industry, has strengthened it. The establishment of factories run by steam has produced a concentration of industries in the cities at the expense of the house industries carried on in the country. Three principal centers have been thus formed, at the meeting points of various highways of traffic, at Ghent, Courtrai, and Lille. In these three centers the manufacture of textiles from flax, wool, jute, and cotton is the predominating industry almost to the exclusion of all others. The Lille group is by far the most important of them because it enjoys particular economic advantages. Situated near the Belgian frontier, it profits by the differences created by the custom duties between France and Belgium. In Belgium, a country of free trade, where the cost of living is less, Lille recruits its army of laborers at a low wage. These laborers, taking advantage of the proximity of the frontier, work in France without losing the privilege of living in Belgian territory; and so the factories of Lille, enjoying a protective tariff, have at the same time plenty of Belgian laborers who accept a lower wage than the French could do. This artificial condition, favorable to both employers and employees, is the principal cause of the enormous development of the group of cities comprising Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and Armentières, which, with their 150,000 workingmen, form one of the most important industrial centers of western Europe.

Along with this industrial growth of the cities, however, manufacturing again tends to invade the country districts. As in the Middle Ages the country people are eager to add an industrial income to what their agricultural products bring them, and the employers, on their part, tend to look to the country for laborers who are more docile and who are satisfied with less. The movement of expansion is therefore clearly defined. The Ghent center is spreading little by little over the whole of eastern Flanders, where factories are being built in the villages and in the towns; already there are more cotton looms outside of the city than in Ghent itself. The Courtrai center is becoming elongated and is expanding across central Flanders from the vicinity of Ypres and Roulers to Renaix. The industries of Lille are advancing to the west, as far as Hazebrouck and Béthune; to the south, its manufacture of ready-made garments extends its influence beyond the border of Flanders towards the coalfields. Inner Flanders thus tends to become one great factory, while at the same time remaining one of the richest agricultural lands of Europe.

These two conditions explain the presence, in so small a territory, of so large a population.

The Population. Flanders is densely and very diversely populated. There are a great number of cities, of which several have more than 100,000 inhabitants, and yet few other regions in the world have so large a rural population.

The cities of inner Flanders are the natural product of conditions favorable to commerce and industry. They have sprung up and developed at the confluence of rivers, at the crossings of land and river routes, at the zone of contact between different regions. But in the nineteenth century all the cities which have not felt the industrial renaissance have languished or decreased in importance, as for example Ypres and Bruges. On the other hand, those which have become centers of industry have experienced wonderful growth. Alost, Courtrai, and Roulers have tripled in size in the last century. Ghent, which had 55,000 inhabitants in 1801, numbered more than 200,000 in 1910. In the Lille region the progress has been more remarkable still. Armentières had 7,500 inhabitants in 1804 and 52,000, with its suburbs, in 1901. Lille from 75,000 grew to 290,000. The two towns of Roubaix and Tourcoing have increased tenfold (from 20,000 to 203,000). With their suburbs, these two urban centers, Lille and Roubaix, almost form one city of 600,000 inhabitants.

However, in spite of this urban expansion, the rural districts preserve a large population, which sometimes exceeds 400 inhabitants to the square kilometer (1036 to the square mile). What is still more remarkable, this rural population remains widely scattered. The individualism of the Fleming has been fostered by the nature of the soil, for the impermeability of the subsoil makes it possible for him to reach water everywhere not far below the surface and thus to build his house wherever he wishes. The house standing alone by itself is thus the ruling type throughout inner Flanders. There is a difference, however, between the east and the west in the distribution of these scattered dwellings. In the west, where the soil is more clayey and wet and where communication was difficult before the building of roads, the houses were built as if by chance anywhere about the countryside in the middle of the farmer's land; and they are often still scattered in this manner, although the building of roads has exerted an attraction toward the crossroads. In the east, where the sandy soil was more viable, the houses are always ranged along the roads, but with some space between them, so that every road looks like a long suburban thoroughfare with houses separated by fields. Thus is satisfied the instinct for independence so ingrained in the heart of every true Fleming.

The figures for the density of population are striking. Before the war the total population of the natural region of Flanders as here defined was estimated at 3,250,000 for an area of 10,000 square kilometers (3,860 square miles), or 325 per square kilometer (842 per square mile)—a remarkable figure, comparable only with those of the most densely populated regions of the globe. In some parts the average is even much higher. Eastern Flanders has 250 inhabitants per square kilometer (647 per square mile); the Flemish part of the French Département du Nord, more than 500 (1,295 to the square mile); the "arrondissement" of Lille, more than 800 (2,072 per square mile). In the Alost district, eleven purely rural townships have

more than 400 inhabitants per square kilometer (1,036 per square mile). The presence of such dense populations is comprehensible in the highly industrial districts; but in the purely agricultural sections, with their poor or only moderately fertile soils, it is a veritable marvel, in fact a sociological problem that can be solved only by emigration. Flanders is over-populated and has always been so in proportion to its resources. Part of the population must submit to the necessity of going away to find what its own country cannot offer. In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries colonies of Flemish people settled in all parts of Europe, even as far as Transylvania; others left in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and especially in the nineteenth century.

Today, emigration is still taking place but it has assumed more varied forms. Numbers of workingmen, availing themselves of the facilities offered by railways, travel every day or every week to their work in the large industrial centers, either in France or Belgium. This shifting population amounts to perhaps 50,000 or 60,000. Others leave for a whole season, going south to the brick-kilns and especially to the rich agricultural region of the Paris Basin, and farther south, to Auvergne. More than 50,000 take part every year in this pacific invasion. A large number settle permanently outside of Flanders, in Artois, Picardy, or in the Walloon country; others go to Canada or to the region of the Great Lakes. Overpopulous, Flanders is gradually emptying itself towards the West.

Thus we see that Flanders is not a country of easy and careless life. Man has had to struggle with all his might against nature, and the struggle is one which never ends. The coastal plain has been wrested from the water and is preserved only by the utmost care and attention. The inner lands, meagerly endowed, only by long and patient efforts have been transformed into a prosperous agricultural and industrial region. Few regions show to such an extent the marks of human toil. This continuity of effort, indeed, gives ground for the hope that, at the close of the war which has so cruelly devastated it, Flanders will not be long in recovering her prosperity, thanks to the indomitable energy of her children.